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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001473

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM IZ IR

SUBJECT: RRT ERBIL: KRG ELECTIONS: NAWSHIRWAN SAYS KDP AND PUK (THROUGH IRAN) SEPARATELY PRESSURE HIM TO WITHDRAW HIS CANDIDACY

REF: BAGHDAD 1170

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor John G. Fox; reasons 1.4(d)

This is an Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) cable.

¶1. (C) Summary. Nawshirwan Mustafa, leader of the PUK breakaway &Change8 list in Sulaimaniyah Province, informed RRTOff that KRG President Masoud Barzani sent an emissary on two successive days to persuade him to withdraw from the upcoming elections for the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament (IKP). Immediately after that, Nawshirwan reported, two senior Iranian intelligence officers visited him to make a similar appeal. The Iranians told Nawshirwan they came at the behest of President Jalal Talabani. Against a backdrop of continued intimidation and harassment of Change list supporters, these recent visits have made Nawshirwan feel increasingly worried for his safety. End Summary.

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Masoud Barzani Sends Emissary to Nawshirwan
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¶2. (C) RRTOff met with PUK Change List leader Nawshirwan Mustafa and his brother-in-law Mohammed Tawfiq on May 26 to discuss the Change list campaign. According to Nawshirwan and Tawfiq, Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), sent a representative of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to visit them on two successive days, May 16 and 17. The representative, Jamal Qasim, is a member of the KDP's Central Committee, the leadership body that ranks just below the KDP Politburo.

¶3. (C) According to Nawshirwan, on May 16, Qasim told him that it was totally wrong to run a separate list in the elections because to do so was against the interests of the people. Nawshirwan reported that Qasim said that President Barzani was willing to find a way to bring together both wings of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)) those loyal to PUK Secretary General Jalal Talabani and those aligned with the reformers) so that they would run together in the elections and not form separate lists. Qasim added that Barzani was willing to do whatever it took to bring the reformers back into the fold. Nawshirwan replied that the reformers did not have a new list of demands; they wanted the same things they have been asking for all along. Furthermore, he continued, Talabani would never do what the reformers have been asking for. As a result, Nawshirwan said that the reformers would continue to run a separate electoral list.

¶4. (C) According to Nawshirwan, Qasim returned the following day in another attempt to persuade Nawshirwan to give up running. He repeated the same message as the day before, but this time his tone was less friendly, using tougher language, and was delivered as a warning. The emphasis was no longer on the request but on the consequences. Qasim said that the

separate list would result in a serious split, not only in the PUK but in the Kurdish movement as a whole, and that this split would not be in the interests of the Kurdish people, but only of their enemies. Qasim concluded by saying that Barzani was seriously asking Nawshirwan to give up running the separate list because the consequences would be dangerous for everyone: for the KDP, the PUK . . . and the reformers.

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Talabani Sends Senior Iranian Intelligence Officers?
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¶15. (C) Nawshirwan told RRTOff that two Iranian officials paid him a visit on May 18, calling shortly before they arrived to let him know they were coming to see him. The sole topic of Qlet him know they were coming to see him. The sole topic of the meeting was the upcoming election. Besides Nawshirwan and the two Iranian officials, Mohammad Tawfiq was the only other person present at the meeting.

¶16. (C) Tawfiq claimed that the two Iranian officials were General Majidi and General Mohamadi. Tawfiq described General Majidi as the Deputy to IGRC Quds Force Commander Qasim Soleimani, who oversees the KRG file in the Italaat, the Iranian intelligence agency. Tawfiq claimed that General Mohamadi is a deputy of General Jafari, who is the head of the Revolutionary Guards, intelligence agency, the Qarada Ramadan. According to Tawfiq, (who created the PUK,s intelligence agency, the Zanyari, in 1992 at the direction of Talabani) the Qarada Ramadan is responsible for dealing with the Kurdistan Region, and Mohamadi is specifically responsible for Sulaimaniyah Province.

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¶17. (C) According to Nawshirwan, the Iranian officials came at the request of Jalal Talabani, who asked them to try to persuade Nawshirwan to abandon his candidacy. He reported that they said that the Government of Iran believes Nawshirwan is not doing the correct thing, and should not stand against Talabani. They advised him to give Talabani more time to come up with a solution to the problems between the PUK leadership and the reformers.

¶18. (C) Nawshirwan said that the Iranians said that Iran supported Talabani and would not give up on him. They referred to Talabani by his official title) President Talabani) rather than Mam Jalal. (Mam Jalal means Uncle Jalal; it is Talabani,s customary title.) Nawshirwan believes they used the title &President8 on this occasion to emphasize Talabani,s importance.

¶19. (C) According to Tawfiq, the Iranians spoke &as smooth as silk.⁸ Yet while they never resorted to harsh language, their words &cut as sharply as a blade.⁸ The Iranians repeated the word &danger⁸ several times, as in: &What you are doing is dangerous,⁸ and &The situation might become very dangerous.⁸

¶10. (C) Nawshirwan and Tawfiq said that this meeting was extremely unusual. Since the two men resigned from the senior ranks of the PUK leadership at the end of 2006, they had not received such high ranking Iranian officials. Moreover, they were struck by the manner in which their visitors had addressed them, and by the fact that the visitors told them that they had come at the request of Talabani himself.

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Comment
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¶11. (C) These two recent visits by a KDP emissary and the Government of Iran have made Nawshirwan and Tawfiq feel increasingly worried for their safety. The PUK has publicly stated that the Change List has a very limited appeal and

will win fewer than ten seats. However, the degree to which the PUK is intimidating supporters of the Change List (see reftel), indicates that perhaps privately, the party leadership might be much more concerned than it lets on. In addition, we continue to hear reports from various government officials (including teachers) that have been dismissed for supporting the Change list. The fact that now the KDP is involved could indicate it is concerned about Nawshirwan's chances in the election, or that it is responding to a PUK request. Talabani maintains close ties to the Iranians, whereas Barzani remains extremely suspicious of them. A contested election, possible protests and violence over election results, and any resulting civil disorder could serve Iranian interests, provide cover for espionage and undercutting Kurdish autonomy.

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